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Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region**

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/241 and provides an overview of the activities and achievements of the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region from August 2013 to July 2014, in the context of an increasing demand for support and expertise in the Middle East and North Africa region.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/241 on the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region, in which the Assembly, inter alia, requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its sixty-ninth session a report on the implementation of the aforementioned resolution. The report outlines progress achieved by the Centre from August 2013 to July 2014.[1]

2. The Centre was established by the General Assembly in 2005 (resolution 60/153). It is mandated, under the supervision of Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), to undertake training and documentation activities according to international human rights standards and to support such efforts within the region by Governments, United Nations agencies and programmes, national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations. The Centre is hosted by the Government of Qatar.

3. On 27 December 2013, the General Assembly endorsed the proposal of the Secretary-General that the costs of strengthening the Centre be borne by the regular budget and extrabudgetary resources (A/C.5/68/17, paras. 10-12).The Centre is therefore now supported through additional financial resources from the regular budget of the United Nations, including for three staff members (1 P-5, 1 P-4,1 P-3).

4. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 67/162, regular budget resources have been allocated to reinforce the staffing capacity of the Centre, thus enabling it to better respond to training and documentation demands in a more timely and adequate manner, and to help to fill the gaps in terms of expertise and relevant Arabic-language training materials.

5. The recruitment status of the posts financed from the regular budget is as follows (A/C.5/68/17, para. 9):

(a) Head of the Centre (P-5): the post was converted from extrabudgetary resources;

(b) Human Rights Officer (P-4): the incumbent assumed his duties on 7 July 2014;

(c) Human Rights Officer (P-3): recruitment is in process;

(d) General Service staff: the post of Administrative Associate (G-6) has been advertised and recruitment is in process.

6. With the completion of the recruitment process outlined above, the Centre will be able to expand the reach and scope of its training activities. Furthermore, it will be in a better position to provide additional support to the other OHCHR presences in the region, including the country offices in Yemen and Tunisia, the regional office in Lebanon and the human rights component of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL).

[1] The geographical mandate of the Centre covers 25 countries, the majority of which are situated in the Arab region. Three are situated in South-West Asia. The countries are: Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen and State of Palestine.

7. The Centre has continued to conduct important work in accordance with its mandate, particularly on the promotion of the work of the United Nations human rights mechanisms and combating human trafficking. With additional resources, it is envisaged that the Centre will further develop and expand its activities, and cover wider beneficiary groups across the South-West Asia and the Arab region.

8. The table in the annex reflects an updated list of actors participating in activities conducted by the Centre, and countries in which the Centre has held events. In 2012, 380 participants benefited from Centre activities and, in 2013, 420 persons took part in activities organized by the Centre.

II. Main achievements of the Centre

9. The Centre continued to provide services in line with the six strategic thematic priorities described in the OHCHR Office Management Plan for 2014-2017 and set out below:[2]

(a) Strengthening international human rights mechanisms;

(b) Enhancing equality and countering discrimination;

(c) Combating impunity and strengthening accountability and the rule of law;

(d) Integrating human rights in development and the economic sphere;

(e) Widening the democratic space;

(f) Early warning and protection of human rights in situations of conflict, violence and insecurity.

10. The Centre plays an important capacity-building role for various actors, including Governments, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations and actors, and United Nations entities. It has also been engaging with regional organizations, such as the League of Arab States, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab Network for National Human Rights Institutions.

11. Requests by Member States for capacity-building have significantly increased. Moreover, several Member States have financially assisted the Centre in implementing activities in their countries. There has also been an increase in country-based training which has now surpassed regional training exercises.

12. Member States have consistently requested training courses in the following areas: reporting to the United Nations treaty bodies and under the universal periodic review; basic and advanced human rights training courses for diplomats, journalists, law enforcement officials, national human rights institutions; and a human rights-based approach to combating human trafficking in persons.

[2] OHCHR Management Plan 2014-2017 (http://www2.ohchr.org/english/OHCHRreport2014_2017/OMP_Web_version/media/pdf/0_THE_WHOLE_REPORT.pdf).

13. The Centre continues to be guided by the outcome of the September 2010 workshop on the future vision of the Centre,[3] including the development of information and documentation systems on human rights, capacity-building and awareness-raising activities on human rights and provision of support and advice to Member States and non-governmental organizations on human rights education. Strengthening the capacity of Arab diplomats to interact with international human rights mechanisms has been identified as a key area during the regional expert workshop.

14. The Centre has affirmed its role as a key player in promoting human rights-based approaches to combating human trafficking in the region. The mandate of the Centre expressly provides for working with national human rights institutions, an objective that has been highlighted in its planning for 2014-2017. Finally, there has been a notable increase in the demand for training of law-enforcement officials following developments in the Middle East and North Africa. In conducting its activities, the Centre has sought to ensure gender balance among participants and trainers and has found that this approach contributes to the success of its training courses and other activities.

15. Since its establishment, and following regional consultations, the Centre has carried out regional programmes which have also been adopted and implemented at the country level. The Centre's key training programmes cover:

(a) Human rights and diplomacy;

(b) Combating human trafficking;

(c) Support to national human rights institutions;

(d) Human rights and media;

(e) Human rights education;

(f) Police training on human rights.

A. Human rights and diplomacy

16. The regional training course on human rights and diplomacy has been a main activity of the Centre since its establishment. The consistently positive feedback received on this course at the regional level has led several Governments to request similar training activities at the country level. For example, from 11 to 14 May 2013, the Centre organized a training course for 25 Yemeni diplomats in Yemen. As a result of the course, a number of diplomats from the region are better equipped to contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights through their work. In Yemen specifically, this has led to changes in the basic deployment training module on consular work to emphasize the protection of citizens' rights abroad. The Centre also

[3] In September 2010, a workshop was held on the future vision of the Centre. Involving more than 60 regional experts and representatives of Governments, civil society and national human rights institutions, it was held to determine the principal needs of the region in terms of human rights capacity-building. The workshop identified key areas for intervention, and its discussions provided much of the foundation for the development of the Centre's strategic priorities in terms of activities within the parameters of its established training and documentation mandate.

established a network of Arab diplomats who participated in its specialized training courses.

B. Combating human trafficking

17. The Centre is committed to promoting a human rights-based approach to combating human trafficking, and bases its engagement on the Arab Initiative to Combat Human Trafficking, which was adopted in 2010.

18. From 27 to 29 April 2014, OHCHR organized a workshop in Saudi Arabia that was attended by 30 participants, including 14 women, from different governmental departments, such as the Ministry of the Interior (police guards, immigration officers and police investigators), the Prosecutor's office, the Human Rights Commission and the National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking.

19. The workshop's objectives were to introduce the participants to the international framework and the Saudi national law for combating human trafficking, and to present tools and mechanisms for victims' identification and the best methodologies for investigating crimes of trafficking.

C. Support to national human rights institutions

20. The Centre supports institutions and commissions aspiring to comply with the Paris Principles through the provision of training and documentation. There are nine national human rights institutions in the region supported by the Centre. Seven of them comply fully with the Principles relating to the Status of National Human rights Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (the Paris Principles)[4] and have been granted "A" status accreditation by the International Coordinating Committee for National Human Rights Institutions. These include the national human rights institutions of Afghanistan, Egypt, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, Qatar and the State of Palestine. Two national human rights institutions in the region, those of Algeria and Tunisia, received "B" status accreditation.[5]

D. Human rights and media

21. A regional training programme for journalists was developed by the Centre in cooperation with prominent media outlets, such as the Al-Jazeera Television Channel, regional and international organizations, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The Centre conducted two such training programmes during the reporting period, the first in Yemen on 11 and 12 May 2013 and the second in Morocco from 6 to 9 May 2014.

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[4] See General Assembly resolution 48/134.

[5] International Coordinating Committee for National Human Rights Institutions accreditation status as at 19 July 2013; levels of accreditation by the Committee: "A" Voting member: complies fully with the Paris Principles; "B" Observer member: does not fully comply with the Paris Principles; "C" Non-member: does not comply with the Paris Principles.

22. The training workshop in Morocco was attended by 32 journalists. Participants were introduced to the following topics relevant to their profession: international human rights standards related to media protection; assessing media coverage of human rights issues in the region and identifying challenges; a human rights-based approach for media coverage; the role of oversight bodies in the protection of media and journalists; and safety and security in the field. The workshop also included a practical exercise through which participants had a unique opportunity to apply the skills they acquired during the training course. Following the workshop, participants developed a social media group for their human rights activities, and have since been exchanging information about human rights and media freedom in their respective countries. Furthermore, they have developed a regional network for journalists who are interested in promoting human rights issues.

E. Human rights education

23. On 15 and 16 January 2014, the Centre organized a training workshop on developing educational materials to promote human rights in elementary and secondary schools. The 18 participants represented different ministries and civil society organizations from the region (Jordan, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, the Sudan, Tunisia and the State of Palestine). The workshop aimed at identifying best practices in the region in: developing human rights education and programmes; integrating human rights values in educational materials; and national initiatives on human rights education. Participants put forth a series of recommendations to enhance the process of promoting human rights education in the region, such as the organization of a training workshop on quality standards, the development of a regional plan for teachers' training courses and the production of an academic manual to help deliver human rights concepts in schools.

24. From 19 to 21 January 2014, in Jordan, the Centre, in partnership with Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict, organized a Regional Forum on the Protection of the Right to Education during Insecurity and Armed Conflict in the Middle East and North Africa Region. Some 104 participants from 24 countries attended the event, including policymakers and legal advisers from ministries of education, justice, foreign affairs and human rights, as well as representatives of civil society, national human rights institutions, academia and legal practitioners. United Nations representatives were also in attendance. The Forum recommended the development of a legal stakeholders' network for the protection of the right to education to help to provide legal protection for students, teachers, schools, and universities. Participants expressed a strong interest in collaborating further to help to implement the recommendations.

25. The Centre is currently creating a website dedicated to the protection of the right to education during insecurity and armed conflict in the Arab region. Following the forum, the Doha Centre started establishing a network of individuals, including human rights professionals, government representatives and representatives from the United Nations, civil society and academia to help to set up a platform to raise awareness and exchange best practices on the topic.

26. In 2014, the Centre conducted a workshop for high school students in Qatar focusing on the concepts of human rights within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international conventions, and another workshop for university students in Qatar on the concept of gender and diplomacy.

F. Police training courses on human rights

27. The expansion of the Centre's activities for police training courses encompasses an assessment of the training needs of law enforcement agencies, and the development of strong regional programmes for the training of trainers.

28. The Centre organized several consultations with a variety of actors, including the Human Rights Department at the Ministry of the Interior of Qatar on combating impunity and strengthening accountability and the rule of law. Furthermore, the Centre seized the opportunity presented by the newly established Police Academy in Qatar, to integrate human rights into the training material for police students. The Centre has been gathering and analysing different training materials for law enforcement agencies with the aim of designing a pilot project for the Qatari Police Academy in 2015.

G. Other activities

29. The visibility of OHCHR in South-West Asia and the Arab region has been greatly strengthened as a result of OHCHR interventions in relation to the human rights situation in the region. The developments in the region have generated a great demand for the promotion of human rights through human rights training and documentation capacity. With increased resources, the Centre has been empowered to fulfil its training and documentation mandate and to better meet the demands it faces, particularly with regard to the development of tailored training material. It has thus been able to reach a larger array of beneficiaries.

30. The Centre has prioritized the use of the Arabic language in specialized training courses and documentation materials[6] with a view to obtaining wider coverage. It has developed an Arabic-language website to disseminate information about the Centre and its activities and provides a pool of essential United Nations human rights documentation.[7] Furthermore, the Centre has been publishing a regular newsletter in Arabic and English, which is available in print and digital formats.

31. Through regional consultations with Governments, national human rights institutions, academia, non- governmental organizations and other stakeholders, the Centre has provided a platform for discussions and exchange of experiences and expertise on a variety of human rights issues, including the impact of foreign debt on human rights and on the protection of the rights of minorities.

[6] In fulfilling its training and documentation mandate to meet the regional needs, it is envisaged that the Centre will eventually make use of a number of working languages, including but not limited to Arabic, Farsi and English.

[7] www.undohacentre.ohchr.org.

32. On 18 and 19 December 2013, the Centre, in cooperation with Penal Reform International in Jordan, organized a training workshop on international and regional mechanisms to combat torture and integrate them into national strategies for national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations in the Arab region. Participants recommended developing a regional strategy to combat torture in that region. A follow-up training course is envisaged on the role of national human rights institutions in combating torture, as well as on sharing best practices. The Centre has developed a network to provide all participants with the latest information on the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, and the Subcommittee on Torture and other mechanisms.

33. On the occasion of International Labour Day, the Centre took part in the first conference in Qatar dedicated to the protection of labour rights. It made a presentation on international labour standards and provided technical assistance to Qatar in its publication of the first official report on labour rights in that country.

34. In addition, the Centre has institutionalized training courses at the regional and country levels on treaty bodies, special procedures and the universal periodic review. This has led to an increased understanding of human rights mechanisms and of ways to improve engagement with the universal periodic review. In particular, participants developed a checklist of issues to be addressed prior to a review.

35. On 24 May 2014, in close cooperation with the Qatar National Human Rights Committee, the Centre organized a training session on the universal periodic review for Qatar, which focused on understanding the process and requirements for the implementation of the recommendations of the review.

III. Conclusion

36. **Over the past year, the Centre has continued to establish itself as a key partner in the region and has demonstrated its capacity to implement a wide range of training and documentation activities in the field of human rights. The increasing demand that has been placed on the Centre by Member States and other stakeholders reveals a growing recognition of its role and impact on strengthening human rights capacities in the region.**

37. **General Assembly resolution 68/241 has allowed the Centre to consolidate its work and mandate in strengthening the capacity of Member States to address human rights challenges afflicting the region. The Assembly's continued support of the work of the Centre has been greatly appreciated.**

Annex

Geographical representation at training courses and consultations conducted by the Centre[a]

	Number of times key consultations and training courses were organized in the country[b]				*Number of times countries nationalities were represented at key consultations and training courses*[b]			
	2011	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*	*2011*	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*
Afghanistan[c]								
Algeria							2	3
Bahrain					3	4		5
Comoros								
Djibouti						1	1	
Egypt					3	4	4	3
Iran (Islamic Republic of)[c]								
Iraq					1	3	2	3
Jordan		2		1	3	3	3	17
Kuwait			1		3	4	2	2
Lebanon	2				4	3		7
Libya		1				1	2	3
Mauritania					1	2	2	3
Morocco				1	1	1		17
Oman	1				4	5	2	2
Palestine					3	3	4	12
Pakistan								
Qatar	3	6	2		6	7	3	14
Saudi Arabia				2	3	4	3	171
Somalia						1	1	
Sudan	1				3	4	3	5
Syria					1			2
Tunisia		1			1	5	2	6
United Arab Emirates	1	2			3	4	2	1
Yemen			3		1	2	5	9
Total	**8**	**12**	**6**	**4**	**44**	**61**	**45**	**285**

Note: Participants include, but are not limited to, Government officials, law enforcement personnel and representatives of national human rights institutions and civil society actors, including journalists. The table does not reflect the representation of regional organizations such as the Gulf Cooperation Council at some of these events.

[a] These are key training courses and consultations and should not be taken as an exhaustive representation of activities.

[b] Key training courses and consultations implemented as at June 2014.

[c] Owing to linguistic limitations, the Centre has not yet managed to engage participants from Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran, the only two non-Arabic speaking countries under the Centre's mandate. The Centre aims to start carrying out training sessions and producing documentation in the languages of all the States covered by its mandate.